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## VII.—DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRESSIV FORM IN GERMANIC

The expressiveness of the progressiv form of the English verb has attracted the attention of many foren grammarians, who briefly but with painstaking care hav endeavored to analyze its force. Also more ambitious attempts hav been made to penetrate into its history and meaning. Pessels in his doctor's dissertation *The Present and Past Periphrastic Tenses in Anglo-Saxon* (1896) has patiently recorded the exampls of the construction in a large number of Old English works. Alfred Åkerlund in his *On the History of the Definit Tenses in English* (1911) has treated both the older and the modern fases of the development with considerabl penetration. Also a number of other scholars hav delt with different fases of the study or hav investigated the development in particular periods or particular sections of the English speaking territory. Several foren scholars hav studied the progressiv form in other Germanic languages and dialects. A brief treatment of the Gothic progressiv in *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, vol. v, pp. 421-6, by Professor H. Gering is refreshingly suggestiv. In spite of this extensiv literature there remains much to be said, and this paper is offerd as a further contribution to the subject.

The writer would fain penetrate back to the oldest meaning of the form and then follow the development to present usage and fix the present territorial boundaries. He would also gladly ascertain the forces that destroyd older uses and led to other forms of expression.

Originally the present participi in this construction was a predicat adjectiv with pure adjectiv force, as can be

seen in Gothic, the oldest Germanic language: "sijais waila hugjands andastauin þeinamma" (Matth. 5. 25) "be kindly disposed to your adversary." In this one instance it is difficult to translate the Gothic construction literally, preserving the present participial form, but this original force of the participial is elsewhere still widely preserved in Germanic: "lasting," "soothing," "expecting"; "leidend," "schlagend," "brennend," "reizend"; especially in compounds that preserve fragments of the older sentence, as in "long-suffering," "peace-loving," "wohl-schmeckend," etc.

Such formations have greatly decreased in number in modern times as the present participle has acquired in the predicative other meanings that have gradually crowded out this oldest meaning. The participle in the old meaning was often unclear or ambiguous and was avoided. An adjective now usually replaces the older participle. The language greatly gained in clearness but often lost in vigor and fine descriptive force, so that we sometimes in reading an old book, pause a moment to enjoy the beauty of expression: "In þis sentence sais sain benet þat sho (*she*) be meke . . . ne prude, ne *wrangdoande*, ne *wastande*, bot *god dutande*" (Northern Prose version of *Rule of St. Benet*, p. 23, ll. 28-31, perhaps thirteenth century). Instead of "*wrangdoande*" we now say "active in evil," *i. e.*, three words for one, and "wasteful" instead of "*wastande*," *i. e.*, an abstract quality for the more expressive activity. The last expression "*god dutande*" we have happily preserved in our "God-fearing."

In Gothic the predicative present participle often assumes a little more verbal force, so that it hovers between the sphere of the adjective and that of the verb: "*sijais waldufni habands* ufar taihun baurgim" (Luke 19. 17) "þu

*byst* andweald hæbbende ofer tyn ceastra" (O. E. Corpus MS. A. D. 1000) "thou schalt *be hauynge* power on ten citees" (John Purvey A. D. 1388) "*have* thou authority over ten cities" (King James version A. D. 1611). These different translations reveal an interesting development. In the Gothic the participial still has considerable adjectival force, but as a verbal form it takes a direct object. As a predicative adjectival the participial had *general, absolute* force. Thus the meaning is exactly the same as the simple tense form used by the authors of the King James edition. That Purvey in 1388 could still use the old construction, while the authors of the version of 1611 reject it, indicates that an important change had taken place in the language. The participial construction had gradually come to be a paraphrase for the simple verb and in this capacity had developed a different meaning from that which it originally had. The participial lost entirely its adjectival force and hence lost the unlimited, absolute force of the early period. The participial form, having acquired more verbal force, now suggested the idea of *duration, continuation*, which naturally, if unqualified, refers only to *present* time and refers to other moments or periods only when qualified by some adverbial modifier that clearly indicates the time. Thus Purvey's "thou schalt *be hauynge*" had become impossible by 1611; for it would have been felt as a paraphrase with limited force applying to some definite period of time, while the thought requires absolute force and denotes in this specific case *absolute* possession of the cities. The attention is here called, not to *duration*, but to the *meaning* contained in the verbal stem, i. e., possession.

This use of a simple tense to call attention to the idea contained in the verbal stem is a very common one to-day:

"*Wórk* when you *work* and *pláy* when you *play*." In this absolute use there is often a tendency to stress the verb. While all four verbs here belong to this same category, two of them are stressed. This absolute use of the simple tense to call attention to the meaning contained in the verbal stem is the result of a long development. Even in the oldest period it was employed with this force, but in Old English the simple tense was burdened with other meanings, so that it did not possess any *distinctive* meaning. Later the paraphrase assumed some of these meanings; so that in course of time the simple tense, relieved of its other duties, now received two distinctive meanings, the one we have just studied and the one to which we shall now turn our attention.

While Purvey, as we have just seen, employed the participial construction absolutely to call attention to the verbal meaning contained in the participial stem, he never employs it in the other common absolute category, namely, to indicate a customary act, as in "He works hard," *i. e.*, is accustomed to work hard. The explanation is that the participial construction in very many cases had become a paraphrase indicating *continuing action*, and its use in such expressions as "is working hard" would have indicated an act in progress instead of a customary act. The situation was quite different in Old English, as can be seen in the following sentence from Ælfric's *Lives*, I, ll. 52-5, where after stating that the creator has made creatures of various forms and gait, the Old English writer remarks: "Sume *syndan creopende* on eorðan mid eallum lichoman, swa swa wurmas doð. Sume gað on twam fotum, sume on feower fotum, sume fleoð mid fyðerum," etc. "Some creep on the earth with their whole body, as worms, etc. Some go on two feet, some on four feet,

some fly with wings." We would destroy Ælfric's *thaut* entirely if we should translate his *syndan creopende* literally by our modern progressiv *ar creeping*, for that suggests a meaning which in the course of the later development became inseparably associated with this form, but which was not yet in Ælfric's time so fully developed. It was already there, but this form also at that time had another, an older meaning, which was still so well understood by Ælfric that he employed it in this sentence. He uses it here with almost adjectiv force, as a predicat participi which gives the verbal meaning *general, absolute* force like an adjectiv and not the limited meaning of to-day which confines its force to *present* time. Thus this form had at this time the force of our *ar wont, accustomed to creep*. This same meaning was more commonly but not so distinctively expressed by a simple tens, as in the case of *gað* and *fleoð* in this same example. A simple tens, however, had other meanings at this time, so that it was not a very distinctive form. Perhaps Ælfric used the absolute form *syndan creopende* in the first instance as he felt it here as a little more distinctive and thought that it would also suggest that the following simple forms should also be interpreted as likewise having absolute force, as they are used in the same connection.

Thus it is evident that, though possessing a more distinctive form, the paraphrase *syndan creopende* had at this time exactly the same absolute force as a simple tens. As can be seen by the modern translation of Ælfric's passage given above, the simple tens is still used absolutely as in Ælfric's time, but we should remember that this is the result of a long development. In Ælfric's time the simple tens had also other meanings that have since been relinquished to other forms. It has thus acquired a clearer absolute

meaning because it has been relieved of these older meanings. If we desire at times to make customary action a little clearer, we can replace it by *is wont, accustomed to*, just as in Old English for the same reason it was occasionally replaced by the parafrasis. While the simple tense is still used in an absolute sense just as it was in Ælfric's time, the old absolute use of the parafrasis was later entirely replaced by another meaning.

As can be seen in the passage from Ælfric in the preceding paragraph, there was once only a very slight difference of meaning between the parafrasis and the simple tense form. They were both used in absolute statements. In English the parafrasis later developed another of the meanings that it had at this time to a very distinct shade, as is described below, and thus became possessed of a wide territory of usefulness with distinct boundaries. In German, on the other hand, the two forms did not become distinctly differentiated, and hence the parafrasis as a clumsy and useless form disappeared from the literary language. In early German poetry the parafrasis was often employed for the simple tense merely for the sake of the rhyme or the measure. Sometimes in older German there seems to be a clear differentiation between the forms, but this distinction did not become firmly fixed. In early New High German we can see that the parafrasis is often used absolutely, with exactly the same force as the simple tense forms: "Das er der krankheit möcht engan wann er von jm hülf *wartend* wer" (S. Brant's *Narrenschiff*, 38, 45, A. D. 1494) = *wartete* "might expect." Even in our own time, however, we still find a few isolated expressions where the parafrasis has been employed with the differentiation of meaning that is so common in modern English: "Es gibt viele Redensarten für die Betäubung, die den

Menschen überkommt, wenn ihm etwas begegnet, dessen er sich durchaus nicht *vermutend war*" (Raabe's *Hastenbeck*, Chap. 13). Stil more commonly in dialect: "Es ist, als wenn irgend etwas einen zwingen tät, im Gehen die Augen zuzumachen, wie wenn eins *schlafend* wär" (Wilhelm Fischer's *Die Freude am Licht*, p. 54). Thus in spite of very many individual manifestations of a tendency to differentiate the two forms in the course of the long historic period, sufficient force did not develop along any line to make an actual differentiation possibl. In English the outcome was quite different. We now turn to the history of this differentiation.

In Gothic the present participi was not only used as a simpl predicat, but it was also employd as a predicat appositiv after some intransitiv of complete predication: "Daga hwammeh *was* at izwis in alh *laisjands*" (Mark 14: 49) "þonne ic dæghwamlice mid eow *wæs* on temple *lærende* (Corpus) "I *was* daily with you in the temple *teaching*" (King James). Here Gothic *was* is not a mere copula, but is an intransitiv of complete predication with the force of *stood* or some similar word. We here stil feel the full force of the original construction, but in very many similar sentences the original meaning has entirely disappear: "Swa hi *wærun* on þam dagum air þam flode *etende* and *drincynde* and *wifigende* and gifta *syllende* oð þone dæg þe noe on þa earce eode" (Matth. 24. 38) "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark" (K. J.). Here we feel the O. E. *wærun*, not as an intransitiv of complete predication, but merely as an auxiliary. It performs the verbal *function*, while the participi indicate the verbal *meaning* and by their participial



form suggest the idea of continuation. We have before us the well known modern English progressive form, which has given the name to this construction altho it is comparatively younger than the other uses described above. It is, however, not modern, but is found in Gothic and Old English.

While the progressive construction has become very common in recent usage, it often cannot be used where it is found in the older periods: "Jah was marjands in synagogim Galeilaia" (Luke 4. 44) "He wæs bodigende on galilea gesammungum" (Corpus) "And he prechide in the synagogis of Galilee" (John Purvey) "And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee" (K. J.). As we have seen above, the simple tenses in more modern usage have become established in absolute statements. *This idea now prevails over that of continuation*, while in older periods the simple tenses had not become so thoroughly associated with absolute statements that this conception was distinctly felt here when the idea of continuation was also present. On the other hand, the moment that any continuing act is brought into relation with some other act and the act thus becomes more or less limited in its scope, the idea of continuation at once asserts itself also in modern usage by the employment of the progressive form: "And he *was teaching* in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years and was bowed together and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him" (Luke 13. 10-12).

At this point, however, present usages differ widely, not in the fundamental principle, but in the individual application of it. To one a series of statements appear as narrative, and simple tenses result, while another sees

among the statements one which does not belong to the chain of facts but serves to *describe* some person or thing, or a state of things which is in some way connected with the main action. Thus Purvey uses the progressiv form in Luke 2. 33: "And whanne his fadir and modir ledden the child Jhesu to do aftir the custom of the lawe for hym, he took hym in hise armes, and he blesside God and seide, Lord, now thou leuyst thi servaunt aftir thi word in pees; for myn iþen han seyn thin helthe, which thou hast maad redi bifor the face of alle pupilis; list to the schewyng of hethene men, and glorie of thi puple Israel. And his fadir and his modir *weren wondrynge* on these thingis, that weren said of hym." Purvey here imagines the parents as standing there wondering at the words. The authors of King James's version regard this sentence as a simpl fact, the beginning of the narrativ that follows: "And Joseph and his mother *marveld* at those things which were spoken of him." That the difference of time between these two versions is no determining factor in the choice of constructions here, is shown by the fact that the authors of the revised version of 1881 follow Purvey: "And his father and mother *were marveling* at the things which were spoken concerning him."

If there is a difference of feeling here now, the irregularity was much greater in erly Middle English: "And [þe stern] said to þaim wit mans woice, | þat þai suld wend to Iuen land. | þai went and tua yeir *war wakand*, | þe stern went forth-wit þat þam ledd" (*Cursur*, ll. 11420-3, erly fourteenth century). Here we hav a chain of simpl tenses interrupted by the one progressiv form "*war wakand*" *journeyd*. The pronounced narrativ type of the sentence calls for narrativ forms, i. e., simpl tenses, thruout. The poet, in accordance with the loose

usage of the older period, employs a descriptiv form, *i. e.*, a progressiv form, because the meaning in the verb and the modifying adverb suggested protracted travel. It may, however, be unfair to call this usage loose. Usage was stil crystallizing. The simpl tenses had not yet become permanently associated with narrativ, and the progressiv forms had not yet been confined to their proper descriptiv functions. Perhaps, as is mentiond below in another fase of the study, the part of the progressiv form that has the personal ending was stil as in oldest English felt as an independent verb, as a simpl tens, so that the poet has after all employd here in his narrativ only true old narrativ forms. Perhaps, we ar here upon the boundary line that separates the old and the new. Now the poet feels the old, now the new, and with changing feeling changes his forms. In individual cases the rime influences his choice to the one side or the other, altho in general his language differs littl from the prose of the period.

If, on the other hand, we look at these forms from the modern point of view, it is quite evident that the writers of this period did not observ the stern modern rule that in strict, unmistakabl narrativ the simpl tenses *must* be used, as in the following sentence: "I *waverd* a long while before I decided," not "I *was wavering*"; but the progressiv form should be employd in "I *was wavering* when his letter came," because it aptly describes the situation. Altho the author of the *Cursur* sometimes deviates from present usage in his employment of the progressiv form, his work is alive with the signs of the new development: "Qua-sum had þat suet meting sene | þof he thre dais *had fastand bene*, | o mete and drinc, wit min entant, | i hope he suld haue ne talent" (ll. 5254-58) "Whoever had seen that

tuching meeting, tho he *had been fasting* for three days he would, I believe, hav had no appetite for meat or drink." "Als þai *war drauand* watur best, | come hirdes (herdsmen) and awai þam kest" (ll. 5687-8).

In the first of these two sentences is a pluperfect tens of the progressiv form, the oldest exampl known to the writer. The presence of it here shows beyond a dout that the value of this construction was being felt at this time and attempts wer being made to extend its boundaries. Its appearance in this northern work is significant. The use of the present and past progressiv in the northern Cotton ms. and its replacement in the southern Trinity ms. by some other construction in a number of cases seems to indicate that the progressiv form was much better known in the North. This confirms the impression that the very frequent use of the progressiv form in the Old Northumbrian glosses (Lindisfarne ms. about A. D. 950) is not alone due to the Latin original. Its frequent use in these old glosses where the Latin original has simpl tenses, and its frequent and idiomatic use in the *Cursur* and other northern works leads us to think that Northern English here, as so often elsewhere, has influenced the literary language.

As we hav seen above, the progressiv form had a wider scope in older English because it could be used absolutely, while to-day it is replaced in absolute statement by the simpl form. There is one noteworthy exception to this rule. It is stil often used when qualified by such words as *always, ever, constantly*: "And symle dæges and nihtes he wæs on byrgenum and on muntum, *hrymende* and hine sulfne mid stanum *ceorfende*" (Mark 5. 5, Corpus) "And euermore, nyt and dai, in birielis and in hillis, he was *criynge* and *betynge* hymself with stoonus" (Purvey)

“And always, night and day, he *was* in the mountains and in the tombs, *crying* and *cutting* himself with stones” (K. J.). The word-order here is interesting. In Purvey’s sentence auxiliary and participi stand together and the rest of the word-order also shows that the progressive form is felt as a grammatical unit, while in the King James version the original conception of the *was* as an intransitive of complete predication is still possible. Though somewhat different in form, there is only slight difference in meaning, the almost indefinable shade that naturally accrues to a different arrangement of words. The two forms are often as here felt as one. The statement is absolute as it is not limited by any definite time or act. Why is it not replaced by a simple tense here as well as elsewhere?

This is an interesting survival of older usage. It has been rendered possible here by the use of the words *always*, *constantly*, etc., which make it perfectly clear that the reference is not to present time or any definite period. In present usage, when we hear a progressive form we expect at once an accompanying statement of the time, or in absence of such statement understand that the act is now in progress. The single word *always* or *constantly* warns us that this time we must not expect a definite, limited act, but an unlimited, absolute statement. In connection with this older usage we have its modern differentiated meaning, so that when it is used in connection with a simple tense the two forms have quite different meanings: “He is *always* working and I can assure you that he always *works*, when he works.” The progressive form represents an act as continuing, the simple form calls attention to the act itself, often, as in the first of the two simple verbs, emphasizing the meaning contained in the verbal

stem. Notice that in the progressiv construction the emphasis is usually upon the adverb, while the simpl tens here takes the accent. The participi like every other word in the sentence, can of course, for some special reason be stress, but it is not the normal condition: "He is always *wórking*, not *pláying*." Here the emphasis arises from the contrast. Here we do not emphasize a definit *act*, but a definit *continuous* act.

This idea of continuation should not here be confounded with customary action: "He is *álways* working," indicating continuous activity, altho at regular periods the activity is interrupted, but "He *álways* works, when he is able," indicating *customary* action. Here the verb is unstress. In the use of the simpl tens and the progressiv form side by side for many centuries they hav become finely differentiated. These finely shaded forms hav sprung from the constant struggl for greater accuracy of expression. Such inherited welth givs every new generation at the very start a natural inclination to precision of statement and strengthens the impulse to further differentiation.

The question has been raised as to what the essential meaning of the progressiv form is as we hav it to-day. Sweet in his *New English Grammar*, vol. II, p. 97, says of the tenses of the progressiv form: "But the expression of duration is not their primary function in Modern any more than in Old English. Nor can they be used to express unlimited duration or repetition; this is exprest by the indefinit tenses as in *the moon shines at night; he goes to Germany once a year*. The characteristic of these tenses is that they use duration to define the time of a point-tens, as in *when he came, I was writing a letter*." Truth and error ar here strangely mixt. The progressiv form

can stil express repetition, altho not as freely as in Old English: "*That* year I was teaching in Chicago." "I am now lecturing once a week." "I am now writing a letter to mother every Sunday." The only requirement here is that there be some limitation as to time. As can be seen by the passage from Luke 4. 44 quoted in the eighth paragraf above from the Gothic and Old English testaments, this limitation was not in force in erlier periods. As can be seen from the modern sentences just given, it is not at all necessary that the progressiv form be used to define the time of a point-tens. The *essential* meaning of the progressiv form is duration and it never means anything els.

The modern use of the progressiv form to expres the idea of duration, as indicated in the preceding paragraphs, has been somewhat limited, as it is now only employd when the idea of duration is the dominating thaut in the context, *i. e.*, it is employd when its distinctiv force is appropriat and fits into the natural flow of speech. In "And said, 'abram þis is þi land | þar þou and tine (thine) *sal be weldand*'" (*Cursur*, ll. 2385-6), we now feel *sal be weldand* as much weaker than our modern *shal rúle*, for we feel the *meaning* of the verb is the dominant idea, not the idea of continuation. Compare "You ought to be *wórking*" with "you ought to *wórk*." The former indicates that the person in question should be engaged in a certain continuous act, the latter emfazizes the *meaning* contained in the verb and implies energetic exertion. The language in the *Cursur* cannot be charged up to the rime, for this work and the literature of the period is characterized by similar usage. English feeling had not yet discoverd that a parafrase is not as forceful an utterance as a simpl form, while it is admirably

adapted to quiet description. It is quite probabl however, that *be weldand* in this passage of the *Cursur* was not yet felt as a parafrase, but rather as two distinct words, so that *be* was in fact felt as a simpl form of the verb and the participi *weldand* as the predicat.

Similarly in "And it was don in tho daies, he wente out in to an hil to preye; and he *was* al nyȝt *dwellynge* in the preier of God" (Luke 6. 12, Purvey). In the King James version a simpl tens is used here: "and *continued* all night in prayer to God." There is no natural emfasis containd in the progressiv form, for it is usually employd to *describe*, not to *affirm*, hence when we desire to emfasize even the idea of duration we hav to choose a word that denotes continuation and then put it in a simpl tens, the natural form of the verb for the conveyance of emfasis. When a discriminating and forceful writer like Purvey in plain prose employs such forms, we ar forced to the conclusion that either the auxiliary was stil as in oldest English felt as a simpl tens, or the simpl tens as we understand that term to-day had not yet acquired its present force as the distinctiv form for affirmation. This was undoutedly a critical period. Such forms wer gradually becoming mere parafrases and there was great danger that they might become substitutes for the simpl tenses without any differentiation of meaning. In German we actually find this unfortunate developement and the later abandonment of the form as clumsy and useless. The English mind here, as so often elsewhere, was quick to see the advantages accruing from a skilful use of the different forms in close harmony with their original meaning and developing force. Thus in modern English there is a much finer differentiation of expression than in the older periods. The English peopl has had things worth



saying and it has struggled incessantly to give them more forceful and perfect utterance.

It may possibly be that the writer in representing the idea of repetition as often present in the progressive form is speaking from the American point of view, for also Mr. Onions in his *Advanced English Syntax*, p. 113 (1st ed.), says: "But if one wishes to denote a habit, one generally says: 'I live at Oxford in winter,' not 'I am living at Oxford in winter.'" The writer is inclined to question the accuracy of Mr. Onions's statement here, for on the preceding page he gives the following sentences as frequent examples of this usage: "I shall be dining alone next week," "He had been taking no exercise for months past." This usage is for the present and past tenses very old, and it would be a pity if it were disappearing in modern England. In America it is as firm as it has ever been in the modern period.

The looseness of expression at this point in Mr. Onions's grammar and other English works may indicate that they have inaccurately stated present usage in England upon this point. Mr. Onions immediately before the last two examples quoted above says: "When a continuous tense refers to a period of action it often implies habit." The progressive form never indicates a habit. It can only indicate that a certain arrangement is continuing at a specified time: "I *am dining* alone this week," but with a simple tense, to express a habit: "I usually dine with friends." "I live in Chicago in winter and in Evanston in summer" indicates a habit, but "I am living in Chicago in winter and at Evanston in summer" indicates an arrangement as still continuing in force at the present time. "He works hard" indicates a habit, but "He is working hard" may, according to the context, represent a vigorous act as

stil continuing at the present time or as interrupted at regular periods, but it does not at all imply that it is the habit of the individual in question to work hard.

When we say, "he is actually *wórking*, not merely *preténding*" we emfasize the quality of an act now continuing; but when we stress the simpl form, we either emfasize a definit act, as in "He actually *wórkt* this morn-ing," or we emfasize the quality of a customary act, as in "He *wórks* when he works and *pláys* when he plays." If we desire to emfasize the act itself, pure and simpl, we employ the gerund or an abstract noun: "That is what I call *wórking* or *wórk*." The gerund, in developing its older ending *-and* into *-ing* by natural fonetic growth, has accidentally receivd the same form as the present participi, but they hav never been confounded, for they are fundamentally different in character. The latter represents an act as continuing, the former an act pure and simpl.

There is often cupld with the emfasis upon the quality of the continuing act or the simpl act an accompanying emfasis upon the time element. When we say "he is *nów wórking*, but he is *úusually pláying*," we contrast two verbal activities of marktly different *duration*; but when we say "He *wórks móst* of the time and *pláys very líttl*," we contrast two marktly different customary or characteristic activities.

We emfasize the idea of *actuality* by the use of a strest auxiliary: actuality of a continuing act: "Why isn't he working?" "He *is* working." Customary act: "Why doesn't he work?" He *dóes* work." Definit act: "Why didn't he finish his work yesterday?" "He *did* finish it."

The writer has often felt that such fine shading of the thaut aut to be taut in detail to our children at school, but he has always been consoled by the thaut

that he who livs in an English-speaking cuntry is always at school. His daily associations teach him to talk and to think. The teacher often proceeds in such a wooden way, operating with lifeless formal rules, that he dedens the feeling of his pupils insted of quickening it. Unless the quality of our grammatical instruction improves, it is better to leav things as they ar and allow the children to lern English in the larger school of life, where in natural daily conflicts language is ever in tuch with stirring thaut and feeling.

A number of scholars hav recently been endeavoring to discover a new use of the progressiv form which they call the "subjectiv" or "emotional" use. Sweet says in his *Grammar*, vol. II, p. 98: "But as soon as the element of volition or action becomes prominent, the definit tenses reassert their rights: compare *it hurts* with *he is hurting him*; *he doesn't see it* with *he is seeing the sights*; *I hear a noise* with *I am hearing lectures*." In the first exampl "it *hurts*" the simpl form is used because, as we hav seen above, the simpl form, not the parafrasis, is used to emfasize the meaning containd in the verbal stem. In "he is *hurting* him" we see something going on and we naturally use the progressiv form. In "he doesn't see it" the speaker reports a fact and of course uses the narrativ form. Likewise in "I hear a noise." In "he is seeing the sights" the speaker represents an act as in progress. In "I am hearing lectures," the speaker tels us that he is pursuing certain studies. In both cases he naturally employs the progressiv form. There is no new development of meaning in any of these expressions. Mr. Onions in his *Syntax*, p. 113, says: "The Continuous forms ar sometimes used idiomatically without implying anything continuous, *e. g.*, 'What *hav* you *been doing* to that picture?'

'Someone *has been tampering* with this lock.' These are different from *hav you done, has tampered*; they give an emotional coloring to the sentence, and express surprise, disgust, impatience, or the like." These progressive forms here simply represent someone as having been engaged in doing something. There is always the idea of the *unfinisht*, incomplete, in the progressive form unless the contrary is expressly stated elsewhere in the sentence or implied in the context. Hence it is natural to use this form of some ineffectiv act that does not please us. There is certainly nothing new in this use, nor does it give an emotional coloring. It is the well-known use found elsewhere. The English mind is simply becoming familiar with the possibilities of the progressive form, and its wide usefulness. The idea of disgust, impatience, etc., lies in the tone, not necessarily in the form, for we very often use it with a tone of approval when we see that someone has been working to some purpose: "Someone has been getting busy." Mr. Onions is most certainly wrong in claiming that the progressive form in these expressions does not imply anything continuous.

A number of scholars have attempted certain limitations to the use of the progressive form on the basis of its inherent meaning. They say that point-action verbs, *i. e.*, those indicating an act of but a moment's duration, cannot assume the progressive form. In fact, however, this usage is common: "Mr. Jones *is rejecting* all such proposals." "Mr. Robertson *is offering* a substantial reward for any information that may be given in regard to the missing boat." "I *am obtaining* more new data every day." Here the act is not represented as continuing in one unbroken activity, but as continuing by a repetition of its force from time to time, or in the midst of a short act the mind

in a flash detects it and seeks to prevent it: "O, I'm *slipping!*" "But I *am forgetting*; you will let me order some fresh coffee for you?"

These scholars also claim that verbs that denote a *state* cannot assume a *progressiv* form, as the meaning precludes a development. Actual usage is against the theory: "I *am feeling* better this morning" simply represents the state as continuing at the present time, but "Now that I've had a good square meal I *feel* decidedly better" records a *positiv* result. Of course we can also say after a good night's rest, a harty breakfast, and further improvement: "I *am feeling* decidedly better," but this utterance does not record a result, it indicates a *continuation* of the improving state. The speaker has already felt his improvement before he made it known, and when he speaks he is conscious of the continuing amelioration. Sweet, in his *Grammar*, vol. II, p. 98, is so confident that the *progressiv* forms of *feel*, *like*, *think*, etc., cannot be used that the writer is somewhat puzzled. In America this usage is very firm. In American English there is no inclination to use the two forms indiscriminately. The present development is in strict historical relations with the English of England and has absolutely nothing to do with the speech of people of Irish descent, who live in such great numbers among us and speak a language which at this point is strongly influenced by Gaelic. In this Irish brogue as in Gaelic the *progressiv* forms are often used as the *simpl* tenses in English. Americans feel this usage as distinctively Irish and foreign to the spirit of English. The writer suspects that further investigation will prove that English usage here does not differ from American speech. In the investigations of this subject by industrious German scholars there are a number of examples that

violate Skeat's rule. These examples hav all been taken from English works. There seems to be a clear need of the progressiv form at this point and it is to be hoped that the English mind which in the past has been so apt to see the advantages of this form for its new needs will employ it here and thus improve English expression.

The use of the progressiv form of *to come* and *to go* is a littl peculiar, but it is in close relations to the general development elsewhere. In answer to an urgent call one often replies: "I'm coming," altho in fact not quite redy and not yet able to start. The speaker is inwardly redy and is getting redy, so that the word, besides its usual literal meaning, has also gradually acquired the force of *to be getting ready to come, to be making preparations to come*, and hence any adverbial qualification may be added: "He is coming next week next month." Likewise: "I am going to Germany next year." Similarly: "Hav you done it? No, but I *am going to*, i. e., *am intending to*."

A number of scholars claim to see inchoativ force in a number of progressiv forms in Old English: "þa sona on anginne þæs gefeohtes wæs se munt Garganus bifigende mid ormætre cwacunge" "then immediately at the beginning of the battl Mount Garganus began to trembl with excessiv quaking" (Sweet's *Grammar*, vol. II, pp. 96-7), Ælfric's translation of "Garganus immenso tremore concutitur." The writer would translate: "Then soon after this at the beginning of the battl Mount Garganus *trembled* or (in order to approach the original) *stood trembling* with excessiv quaking." Mr. Åkerlund in his interesting *History of Definit Tenses* imagins he sees an especially clear case of this usage in Ælfric's "Lives" xxv, 490: "Hwæt ða færilce comon fif englas of heofonum,

ridende on horsum mid gyldenum gerædum und twægen þæra engla on twa healfe iudan *feohtende wæron* and hine eac beweredon " "Lo! then in a wonderful way five angels from heven came riding on horses with golden apparel, and two of the angels *fought* on each side of Judas, or (to approach the original) *stood* on each side of Judas, *fighting* and defended him." Mr. Åkerlund would translate "feohtende wæron" by "began to fight," or "started fighting." The writer cannot see in any of these examples the slightest inchoativ force. At this erly date the progressiv form was stil felt as consisting of a simpl tens followd by a participl used as a predicat appositiv. The simpl form *wæs* had at this erly time the force of *stood*, but both forms ar to-day usually renderd best by a simpl tens. Sometimes we can rescue a part of this old construction by translating by *continued to* plus infinitiv, as in the passage from *Beowulf*, ll. 159-160, quoted in the second paragraf below.

In the two exampls given above and all similar ones, this so-cald inchoativ was in fact an old narrativ form which was used in general like our simpl tens, but with a peculiar additional force which we usually cannot now imitate, for it had this advantage over a simpl tens, that it had an accompanying predicativ participl which indicated *energetic continuous* action. The idea of energetic action lay in the position of the participl, which was usually put in an emfatic place. The usual narrativ of Old English was not infrequently here and there renderd more lively, as in these exampls, by the use of the progressiv form, a device which on account of subsequent developments the later period gradually but very reluctantly was forced to abandon. Even in the course of Old English, this construction *began* to lose its force and

disappear, as the *wæs* together with the participi began to be felt as a unit, a *compound* tens, and thus gradually became unnatural in narrativ, where the new development required a *simpl* tens form.

In respons to an increasing demand, the English progressiv form has stedily grown from small beginnings. There are only three exampls in *Beowulf*: "Gyf þonne Frysna hwylc frencan spræce | þæs morðor-hetes *myndgiend wære*, þonne hit sweordes ecg syððan scolde (1104-6) "If any one of the Frisians in wanton speech should *refer to* (literally *be remembering* or *mindful of*) this feud, then the sword should do its work." This is the oldest use of the progressiv form described at the beginning of this paper. It is not the progressiv form as we know it to-day. The participi *myndgiend* has almost pure adjectiv force. Modern usage grew up out of the type represented by the following two exampls: "ac se æglæca *ehtende wæs*, | deorc deað-scea dyguðe ond geogoðe" (159-60) "but the devilish demon *continued to pursue* (literally *was around pursuing*) the experienced warriors and the yunger men." "Swa se secg hwata *secgende wæs* | laðra spella" (3028-a) "So the brave fellow stood there telling them of the sad news." Here we find the oldest form of our progressiv construction. In both cases *wæs* is an independent verb preceded by a predicat participi which stands in the emfatic position. Gradually the verb lost its independence and came to be felt as forming with the participi a parafrasis, as explaind above. The fundamental idea of the modern construction, *continuation*, is alreidy in these erly exampls found in full force. These two old forms, however, cannot to-day be renderd by the progressiv construction, because modern narrativ absolutely demands a *simpl* tens. At this erly period the



verb was felt as a simpl tens. Later the progresiv form was differentiated from the simpl form. The latter was restricted to narrativ and the former to description.

The growing appreciation of the progresiv form cald forth new tenses. In Old English only the present and past tenses wer employed. In the fourteenth century the compound tenses gradually came into use. In the same period the desire for the passiv forms of the progresiv construction found only imperfect expression. At first the verb *to be* was used in connection with a prepositional form of the gerund: "the church was *in byldynge*, later *a-building*." In the sixteenth century the gerund was sometimes replaced by the present participl: "The church *was building*."

The writer energetically rejects the prevailing theory that this form is a corruption of the older gerundial construction, for the *a-* elsewhere remains firmly intact as in *abed*, *afoot*, etc. Long before this time the present participl was used with passiv force. We find a few examples in the Lindisfarne Glosses of 950 A. D.: "Mið ðy ðonne geneolecte to durum ceastre and heono dead *wæs ferende*" (Luke 7, 12) "cum autem aporinquaret portae ciuitatis et eace defunctus *efferebatur*" "Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out" (K. J.). The Northumbrian scribe was much braver than the authors of the King James version, for undaunted by the lack of a corresponding passiv progresiv form in English he coind one, which later in the sixteenth century began to be used in the literary language. The authors of the King James edition doutless did not hav the courage to translate the corresponding Greek progresiv passiv by this plebeian progresiv, which they doutless herd in colloquial speech. To be

sure, "there was a ded man *carrying out*"—an activ form with passiv meaning—would not hav been a very expressiv form, but it would hav had the advantage of at least indicating the thaut insted of hiding it. We may wel understand the embarrassment of the lerned translators if the new passiv progressiv was then as bitterly opposed as our present one has been almost up to the present hour. Even the revisors of 1881 wer not plucky enough to translate by "was being carried out," but stuck to the imperfect old rendering of their predecessors.

The brave Northumbrian uses this new progressiv passiv in four other places: Matth. 13. 19, 20, 22, 23: "Eghuelc seðe heres word rices and ne on-cneawu cuom ðe ðiowl and genom þæt gesawen wæs in hearta is ðes wæs seðe neh strete *sawende wæs*" (and similarly three more times later) "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the devil came and took away what was sown in his heart, this it was that was sown by the way-side." Here again he has spoken vividly, but this time in a form that is no longer felt. Only the historian of English usage can stil appreciate the force and precision of his language. Where the scribe speaks of the devil taking away what was sown in the hart he very appropriatly uses the regular perfectiv form *gesawen wæs*, as it is represented as alredy lodged in the hart, but where he speaks of that which was sown along the road he thinks of the continued activity of the sower casting out his seed and uses the new progressiv passiv form *sawende wæs*. Here it is not the question of a *condition* or *position*, but of an *act*. The scribe was not speaking of seed *resting* in a wrong place; but of seed that *was put*, or as he intended it, *was being put* in the wrong place. We cannot *feel* this force to-day because, as ex-

plained above, modern narrative absolutely demands a simplification.

This passive progressive form here is employed exactly like the corresponding active progressive forms which are everywhere used in Old English. A mere glance at the array of past tenses in this and the following sentences, and their characteristic setting, shows that this is the common old narrative form of this period. There is an example of exactly the same type found in Bede 52. 29. MS. Ca.: "Swa þone her fram þære arleasan ðeode, hwæðere rihte Godes dome, neh cœastra gehwylce and land *wæs forhergiende*" "So then here almost every city and district was wasted by this impious people, however in accordance with God's righteous judgment." These examples seem to foreshadow the usage that later in the sixteenth century began to appear in the literary language and still later became established for a time. The lack of examples of this usage in the period between 950 and the sixteenth century does not disprove their existence, but only indicates the hostile attitude of the men of letters toward this construction, as can be clearly seen in the Bible of 1611, 1 Peter 3. 20: "while the ark was *in preparing*," where in accordance with their procedure elsewhere the translators disregard the rendering *was preparing* of the N. T. of 1557 (Geneva).

Altho the present participle here was a distinct advance, it was only an imperfect expression and could not permanently satisfy the natural desire for complete accuracy. The creation of a passive form for the attributive present participle in the sixteenth century as in "the noise of a leaf *being moved*" (*Of Ghostes*, 14, A. D. 1596) led almost immediately to the creation of a passive form for the gerund, as in "the blessing of *being associated* with a good

man," and later to our present progressiv passiv, as in "he is *being misrepresented*." In this latter construction the development has been very slow. There are traces of it in the eighteenth century. At that time it found littl favor, as the form "the house is *building*," which was once avoided as plebeian, was now regarded as very elegant. This change of feeling shows of what littl intrinsic value the prevailing "feeling" about forms generally is. These subjectiv values of an age in time yield to the mature insight into the power of the different forms to render thaut *accuratly*.

Even in our own time American writers hav opposed our present progressiv passiv form with considerabl bitterness. Richard Grant White in *Words and their Abuses* (1870) says "that such forms of speech affront the eye, torment the ear, and assault the common sense of the speaker of plain and idiomatic English." In all battls for progress there ar unfortunatly some good men on the wrong side. Many good men in every age hav been blind to the spirit of the age in which they livd, but fortunatly the English people as a whole has ever been peculiarly sensitiv to progress. There ar stil a few peopl who oppose the new passiv forms, but as they ar needed and hav become absolutely indispensabl, their future is assured. The writer cannot agree with those who use them, but at the same time claim that they ar ugly and should be avoided in choice language. We cannot without loss of force put: "In this campain he is *being maliciously misrepresented*" into the activ: "In this campain they *ar maliciously misrepresenting* him." We blunt our finer feeling by speaking ruffly and inaccuratly. The form should correspond closely to our finest feeling and we should never stop short of the full approval of the inner

prompter. A form that thus harmonizes with our best feeling has a real beauty of its own.

The English speaking public has an especial reason for welcoming these new passiv forms, for English is peculiarly poor in passiv constructions. The passiv is one of the very few things in the English language that look shabby. Our passiv system is beggarly poor in comparison with the German perfectiv passiv ("Das Haus *ist angestrichen*") and its actional form ("Das Haus *wird oft angestrichen*"). Compare "The door *was shut* at six, but I don't know when it *was shut*" with "Die Tür *war um sechs geschlossen*, aber ich weiss nicht, wann sie *geschlossen wurde*." The weakness of literary English at this point is apparent. It is here not capabl of expressing thaut accuratly.

As bad as our case looks, there is much hope for the future of the English passiv, for in our colloquial speech we have a much completer system than is found even in German: Actional Passiv: the house often *gets painted*, the house at last *got painted*, etc.; Progressiv Passiv: the house *is getting painted*, *was getting painted*, etc. As literary English also has a progressiv passiv, we hav two progressiv forms: the house *is getting* or *is being painted*. These forms may in time become differentiated under the influence of the different meaning of their auxiliaries. The form with *being* might call attention to a slow or a gradual development, while *getting* might indicate a shorter and quicker movement: "the stone *is slowly being worn away*," "the shore line in Chicago *is gradually being pusht* out further into the lake for the sake of acquiring land for public parks," but "he *is getting flogd*." The form with *being* might emfasize the idea of considerable duration, while *getting* might stress the

conception of the beginning of the development: "his strength *is being exhausted* by this strain," but "his herculean strength *is getting* somewhat *exhausted* by this strain." In German *one* form must serv for both shades of the progressiv function and at the same time perform the actional function: (progressiv) "Das Haus *wird* jetzt *angestrichen*" and (actional) "das Haus *wird* oft *angestrichen*." If in English the present colloquial forms become establisht in the literary language, the present passiv with *to be* wil be reliev'd of its actional function and we shal have a distinctiv perfectiv passiv: the house *is painted*, etc. There is a bright future here before us if we listen to the creativ spirit that has in our past history constantly saut for more perfect forms for a completer expression of our inner life.

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